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SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



January 15, 2020

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Come to the Water

by Rev. Char Burch, Transitional Conference Minister

Calling all SEC authorized ministers! If you have ever felt tired,

overwhelmed, or concerned about the future – please keep reading and “Come to the Water!” If you would benefit from a few days away with time to reflect and be nourished – “Come to the Water.” If you seek ways to have more balance in your life – “Come to the Water.” If you could benefit from connections with colleagues – “Come to the Water.”

Whether as a pastor of a local church, a chaplain, a pastoral counselor, or even retired, life can be stressful. This is an opportunity to distress! The UCC Pension Boards is providing us with the resources to make possible this Clergy Wellness Retreat. The program includes some great workshops, worship, free time and even chair-massages. Since spouses/partners are part of the well-being of authorized ministers, they are also invited to attend. Note: if you are not an authorized minister, encourage those you know to attend!

I know that it is easy to say “I don’t have time to get away” or “taking the time to relax will actually create more stress.” I have said these things. But I have also learned that making the effort to attend such a retreat as this can actually provide the extra breath needed to restore one’s well-being. So come, come to the water and be refreshed!

- **Date:** March 8-10, Place: DuBose Conference Center, Monteagle, TN
- **Cost:** \$20 per person for 2 nights and 5 meals (Cost waived for MIDs)
- **Registration Deadline:** February 21

For the details, schedule and registration [click here](#).



News from the Conference Office



Annual Yearbook Reporting

It is that time of year again! Yearbook reporting for local churches has opened. Please go to http://www.ucc.org/research_yearbook for instructions on how to submit the yearbook reporting online.

If you have any questions or do not know your church's ID number, please check with the Conference Office. This year, churches that complete the yearbook and survey will be entered into a drawing for prizes by the National Office. We as a Conference are hoping for 100% reporting so we can win a prize!

Please submit your yearbook report by February 29th.

From the Generosity Coordinator

by Min. Carrole Moss, Generosity Coordinator

It is my prayer that this year is off to a grand start. Pray that the holidays were great and that you all entered 2020 refreshed and renewed.

"And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your heart and your mind in Jesus Christ. Philippians 4:7. My face is shining upon you, beaming out Peace that transcends understanding. You are surrounded by a sea of problems, but you are face to face with me, Your Peace As long as you focus on ME, you are safe. The closer you live to me, you are SAFE!"



It's that time again, **Transforming Churches, Transforming Lives Grants**

Season. Please review these documents as there have been a few changes to the application to ensure clarity. The application form for this grant will be available on our website from January 20th through February 24th, 2020. Should you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me, DIRECTLY. I'm here to serve.

Thank you for your 2019 Our Churches Wider Missions (OCWM) contributions. You are so important to so many. Your support is so valued and needed.

On a personal note: A huge THANK YOU to all of you who took the time to pray for me, call, text, visit and simply had me on your mind in these past weeks during my recovery. God heard your prayers, and I'm GRATEFUL!

May God continue to bless you, richly, is my prayer. Peace and blessings, as we continue to journey in 2020,



Upcoming Coffees with Char & Heather (Virtual Conversations)

January – Ideas for Lent: You are invited to talk with other pastors about themes and creative presentations as you prepare for Lent. Perhaps you have an idea to share or you are seeking a new idea. Join us for a Zoom conversation. This can be done via computer or phone. Sign up for the date that works for you.

- January 28 (Tuesday) at 7 pm Eastern time: [Register Online](#)
- January 30 (Thursday) at 10 am Eastern time: [Register Online](#)

February – Specialized Ministers: How can the Conference support you in your valuable ministry The ministry of Specialized Ministers touches hundreds of people and the Conference is grateful! This will be a time for

you to share your perspectives on ways in which the Conference can provide support to you.

- February 11 (Tuesday) – 10 am Eastern: [Register Online](#)
- February 13 (Thursday) – 7 pm Eastern: [Register Online](#)

After you have made a reservation, you will receive an email providing you with the link for the connection. If you need assistance making a “reservation” please contact Heather at hfosburgh@secucc.org or 404-719-6572. Come and join with your colleagues in conversation!



Prayer List

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2020. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

Week of January 19

- Shalom Spiritual Center UCC, Snellville, GA (a spiritual community forming in the Atlanta area)
- Marvin Albright
- Larry Evans
- Michael Malcom
- Linda Smith

Week of January 26

- Pilgrim Congregational UCC; Chattanooga, Tennessee
- Joyce Acree

- Paul Eknes Tucker
- J R Finney II
- Kirk Lyman Barner
- Townley McGiffert Jr.

Prayer Concerns

Please hold **Rev. Susan Webeler**, pastor of Sandy Creek UCC in prayer as she is in the hospital recovering from a recent automobile accident in Opelika, Alabama.

Churches in Transition

Central Congregational, Atlanta, GA; Pilgrimage, Marietta GA; First Congregational, Savannah GA; Trinity Congregational, Athens AL; Peace Church, Clemson SC

News from the Wider Church



Puerto Rico Earthquake Recovery Assistance

In Puerto Rico, a series of powerful earthquakes, including one of 6.4 magnitude on Tuesday, January 7, have killed one person, injured several, unleashed small landslides and caused homes and other buildings to crack and crumble. The earthquakes and aftershocks have taken out power

across most of the island, also leaving hundreds of thousands without water.

In response, the Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, UCC associate general minister and co-executive for Global Ministries, is dispatching funds to Global Ministries partner IEUPR (Iglesia Evangelica Unida de Puerto Rico) so the church can assist with needs of first response, such as hygiene kits. Disaster Ministries is also issuing an emergency appeal to continue to assist the people of the island with a goal of \$250,000. [Learn more on the UCC website.](#)

New Legislation Resolves Three Important Issues for Ministries and their Employees

On Friday, December 20, 2019, Congress passed new legislation that repeals certain taxes and reduces costs for ministries and their employees. Thanks to the bipartisan support of legislators in both houses of Congress, the resources of America's religious communities can remain focused on their mission work rather than on these onerous taxes and costs. The Church Alliance (church-alliance.org), a coalition representing 38 denominational benefits organizations, urged legislators to fix three issues that negatively impacted the ministries and church workers they serve.

The three areas affected are:

- Repeal of Cadillac Tax on health care coverage
- Repeal of the Parking Lot Tax
- Clarified church retirement plan eligibility for church-affiliated organizations

Learn more about these changes on the [Pension Boards website](#).

Worshippers Targeted by Gift Card Scam

The Federal Trade Commission, our Conference staff, and some of our churches report that they are seeing a new spin on gift card scams. This time, scammers are pretending to be a pastor asking worshippers for gift card contributions for a worthy cause. Appeals are often made by email, but we've heard people are also getting texts and phone calls, too.

The bogus emails often include the name of the local pastor and a legitimate-looking email address. But a closer look should raise some red flags. For example, the email address isn't the one normally used by the

church, and the service provider is different, too. The message may begin with a simple "Hi," but doesn't include a recipients' name. There also may be spelling errors, including the pastor's name.

The imposter asks you to buy a popular gift card and then asks for the gift card number and PIN on the back of the card. Those numbers let the scammer immediately get the money you loaded onto the card. And once that's done, the scammer and your money are gone, usually without a trace. Learn more about how to prevent this scam on the [FTC website](#).



Tax Resources for UCC Employees and Employers

Did you know that the Pension Boards has a wealth of information available for clergy and churches as they prepare their taxes? Documents include a Clergy Tax Return Preparation Guide (formerly Tax Guide for Ministers), information about the Housing Allowance Resolution (for tax year 2019), as well as Federal Reporting Requirements for Churches. It's available on the [Pension Boards website](#).

Job Opening at PATHWAYS

The PATHWAYS Board of Directors is excited to announce a staff opening for Executive Director of PATHWAYS Theological Education, Inc. The job description, compensation, qualifications, and contact information are available [on their website](#).

News from our Local Congregations



Safe Harbor Family Church Holds MLK Service

Safe Harbor UCC in Clinton, Mississippi recently hosted a community MLK Worship Service. They report they had wonderful leadership from area pastors, and featured Kimble and Julia Funchess as guest speakers. Kimble Funchess, accomplished trumpet player, and Alan Black, Safe Harbor pianist, led the music. Youth from Safe Harbor read portions of the "I Have a Dream" speech.

Pictured in the first photo above, left to right: Rev. Ann M. Rogers-Brigham, Pastor, Safe Harbor, Rev. Maxine Bolden, Pastor, Union UCC, Tougaloo College, Rev. Courtney Stamey, Northside Baptist, Kimble and Julia Funchess, Educators in Yazoo County, MS, Rev. Dr. Shelli Poe, Theologian in Residence and CE Director, Safe Harbor, UCC, and Rev. Robert Blanton, Priest in Charge, Episcopal Church of the Creator



Join a November 2020 Back Bay Mission Trip

by Mary Ruth

Members and friends of Pleasant Hill Community Church will be going to Back Bay Mission in Biloxi MS Nov 8-14, 2020. We still have space for a few

more folks and welcome participants from churches in the Southeast Conference (must be at least 14 years old). There will be a final Informational session on Saturday, Jan 18, at 2 pm at Pleasant Hill Community Church, Pleasant Hill TN. Those attending will learn about the opportunities for service, the purpose of the trip and more about transportation, accommodations, meals and costs. A \$50 deposit for each 'tripper' is due in February. To be prepared for November 2020, the group will be meeting once every other month for planning purposes.

Questions? Contact Coordinators: Mary Ruth at 931-787-7914 or Vivian Adzaku at vivanera1@yahoo.com.

Training and Learning Opportunities



Clergy (and Spouse) Retreat: March 8-10, 2020 Sparkling or Still: Come to the Waters!

Can you use some time for rest and relaxation? Can you use an opportunity to reflect on maintaining a balanced lifestyle? The UCC Pension Boards is

providing the Conference with this unique opportunity for all UCC authorized ministers, spouses/partners, and Members in Discernment as part of their focus on Clergy Wellness! [Learn more on our website.](#)

REGISTER FOR CLERGY RETREAT

MID Retreat is Jan 31-Feb 1; Registration Now Open

The Member in Discernment (MID) Retreat will be held in Atlanta at Virginia Highland Church on January 31st beginning at 1:00 p.m. and ending by noon on February 1st. This year the focus of the retreat will be a Mental Health First Aid training led by Dr. Kathryn Bryan, PhD, MDiv.

"Mental Health First Aid is a course that teaches you how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. The training gives you the skills you need to reach out and provide initial help and support to someone who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem or experiencing a crisis." For more information visit <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/about/>.

The cost will be \$80 which includes all the materials for the training, as well as dinner Friday and lunch Saturday.

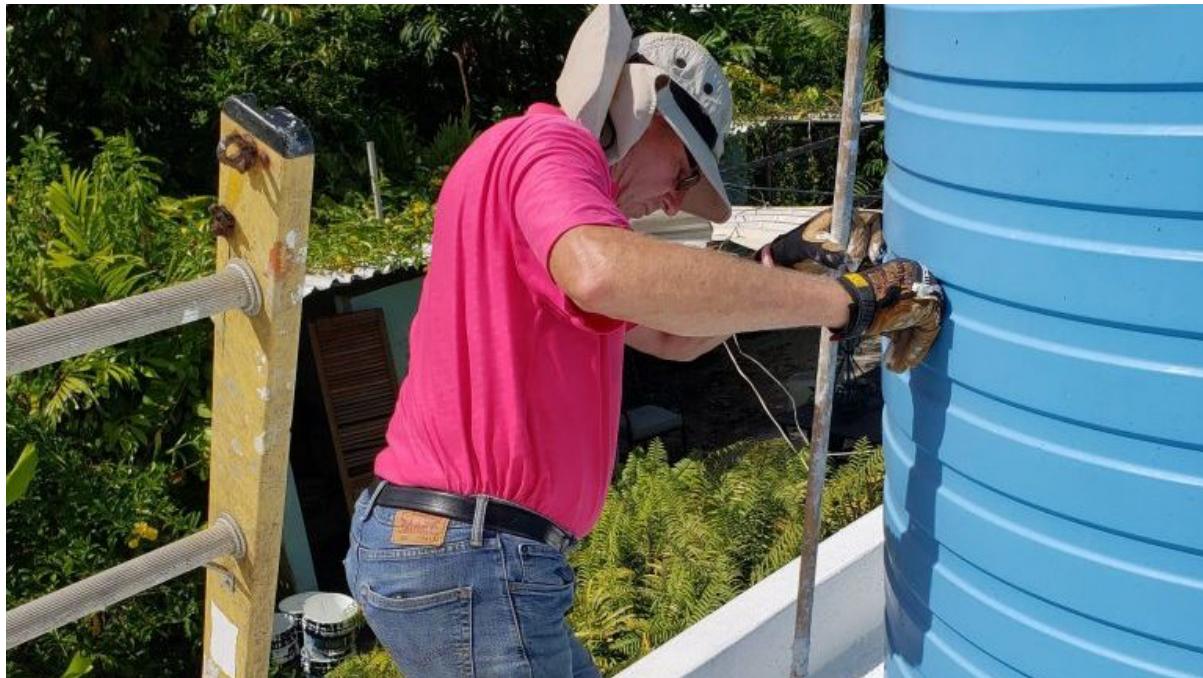
REGISTER FOR MID RETREAT

UCC Asylum Accompaniment Webinar - Jan 24, 2020

Please join the United Church of Christ on Friday, January 24th at 1:00 pm EST for a webinar on "How to Do Asylum Seeker Accompaniment." Over the past year and a half, the number of asylum seekers arriving to the U.S. has increased significantly, and faith and community groups across the country - including numerous United Church of Christ churches - have taken the faith-full step to offer care and welcome to those seeking protection. This webinar will cover the basics of how to do asylum accompaniment while providing a space to share expertise and experience from congregations already deeply engaged in this work. [Learn more and register online.](#)

Boundary Training for 2020

Healthy Boundary Training is now **MANDATORY!!** The training schedule will be posted soon. Please sign up for the appropriate training to ensure that you are in compliance. We looking forward to being in community with you in one of the training sessions.



Join a Mission Trip to Puerto Rico, June 6-13, 2020

The Revs Nancy and Ted Elsenheimer from Garden of Grace UCC in South Carolina will lead a Mission Trip to Puerto Rico on June 6-13, 2020. In collaboration with the UCC Disaster Ministries and the Puerto Rico Conference, they will repair roofs damaged by Hurricane Maria. [Learn more on our website.](#)

Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders (MSTI)

The Lombard Mennonite Peace Center is once again offering Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders (MSTI) from March 23-27, 2020. This course is for pastors and other church leaders interested in learning skills to help them deal more effectively with interpersonal, congregational, and other forms of group conflict. It will be held at Grace Presbyterian Church in Fort Mill, SC (near Charlotte, NC). Please note that those who

register no later than February 21, 2020, will receive a \$200 discount off their tuition. For more information please contact the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center at 630-627-0507 or admin@LMPeaceCenter.org. To register online please go to <https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/4316493>.



Festival of Homiletics Returns to Atlanta

The 28th annual Festival of Homiletics will be returning to Atlanta, May 18 to 22, 2020. This year's theme is "Preaching a New Earth: Climate and Creation" and it will feature Bill McKibben, UCC Associate General Minister of Justice & Local Church Ministries **Traci Blackmon**, Ellen F. Davis, and pastor of Chicago's Trinity United Church of Christ **Otis Moss III**.

This Festival will draw more than 1,200 colleagues for preaching, worship, and dialogue to help attendees develop a hands-on way to engage creation and climate for their own ministry context. Other speakers include Johnathan Wilson-Hartgrove, Raphael Warnock, Carmen Agra Deedy, Raquel Lettsome, Anna Carter Florence, and many more. Make plans for this incredible learning experience with top teachers. [Register today](#) to get the early-bird discount!

Shari Prestemon Social Justice Internship

[Back Bay Mission](#) will soon be accepting applications for the 2020 Shari Prestemon Social Justice Internship. This program provides young adults between the ages of 19 and 35 with a unique opportunity to participate in a 10-week summer program tailored to their interests. Drawing on the Mission's long experience in community engagement and advocacy for justice, the internship will nurture participants' passion for social justice and develop their appreciation for the church's role in seeking social justice. Applications must be submitted by March 1. Notifications will

be made by March 31. More details will be available on the BBM website.

Conference Calendar

Winter Youth Retreat

January 17, 2020 - January 20, 2020
Blowing Rock Conference Center, Blowing Rock NC

Coffee with Char and Heather (Virtual Event)

January 28, 2020 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EST (online)

Coffee with Char and Heather (Virtual Event)

January 30, 2020 @ 10:00 am - 11:30 am EST (online)

MID Retreat

January 31, 2020 - February 1, 2020
Virginia Highland Church, Atlanta, GA

Coffee with Char and Heather (Virtual Event)

February 11, 2020 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EST (online)

Coffee with Char and Heather (Virtual Event)

February 13, 2020 @ 10:00 am - 11:30 am EST (online)

Commission on Ministry Meeting

February 20 @ 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm EST
Online Virtual Meeting

Board of Directors Meeting

February 28 - February 29
Pilgrimage UCC, Marietta, GA

SEC Clergy Retreat

March 8-10, 2020
DuBose Retreat Center, Monteagle, TN

SEC Annual Meeting

June 19-20, 2020
Montgomery, AL

National Youth Event

July 22-25, 2020

Purdue University, IN

View the **full calendar** of events online: <https://www.secucc.org/events/>

Contact Us

Conference Minister: **Rev. Char Burch;** cburch@secucc.org

Assoc. Conf. Minister: **Rev. Heather Fosburgh;** hfosburgh@secucc.org

Generosity Coordinator: **Min. Carrole Moss;** cmoss@secucc.org

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